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The One who forgot

By RUBY M. AYRES

BEGIN HERE TODAY

PETER LYSTER lost his memory from shock when a shell on the western front in France laid him out and killed 20 of his buddies. Before leaving London Peter had become engaged to NAN MARRABY, who is broken-hearted over the fate which has snatched all thoughts of his former love from the man she had promised to wed.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

ARNOTT colored. "It's the girl I told you about the other night, Nan Marraby," he said. "Oh!" Peter's voice was indifferent. "And—someone else she spoke of, someone else she said she was going to buy chocolates for—was that anyone I ought to know?"

"No," said Arnott. "At least, Miss Marraby lives with her—Mrs. Endicott." Peter made no comment. "How long are you going to be in here?" he asked presently. "My dear chap, we'll go when you like," said Arnott hastily. "What do you want to do? I'm game for anything."

"I don't care, but don't mind me, if you want to get along with Miss Marraby." "But she'll leave us, of course. It was quite chance, running up against her." He glanced over to Nan, and asked diffidently: "Fine looking girl, don't you think?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders. "Not bad," he said laconically. Arnott was relieved when Nan rejoined them. "Got the sweets?" he asked. "Yes; and now having got all I can out of you I'm going to be mean and run away," she answered. "I've got a lot of shopping to do." She held a hand to Arnott. "Goodbye."

"When shall I see you again?" he asked eagerly. He had not meant to ask the question, but it seemed to rise to his lips unawares. Nan laughed. "Oh, I don't know; I'm going out of town soon for a few days."

"Really?" Arnott looked absurdly disappointed. "Oh, I say," he protested. "I was hoping we were going to see a great deal of one another."

Nan looked at Peter; he was brushing some dust from the sleeve of his tunic and was apparently not in the least interested in either of his companions. A wave of great bitterness swept over her soul.

It seemed impossible that she could laugh and talk with Arnott while her very heart and soul were brooding at Lyster's feet. "I've got to go home, you see," she heard herself explaining flippantly. "Not that I want to exactly—I'm afraid I'm not a dutiful

daughter really—but— "Let me know when you are going, and when, won't you?" Arnott asked. They were outside on the path now, and it was with a rush of relief that Nan felt the cool spring air on her burning cheeks. "Oh, yes, I'll let you know," she answered lightly. It's a dreadful sleepy hollow of a place where I live."

"And where is this—appalling spot?" Peter asked, with a ghost of a smile in his eyes.

Nan turned and looked at him. She was wondering if she would remember the name if she spoke it; she had told him about it so often, and her life at home and her life with which she had escaped from her stepmother.

"It's a little place in Hertfordshire called Leavenden," she said clearly. "I don't suppose you've ever heard of it, but—"

She broke off; John Arnott had given a war-whoop of delight. "Leavenden?" he said. "Why, that's only two miles from my sister's place; she lives at Little Gadsden, the next village."

There was no reflection of John Arnott's delight in Nan's face. She had made up her mind to keep away from Peter by going to her own home; and now it had turned out that her own home and Arnott's were close together.

"You don't look very delighted," Arnott was saying ruefully. "Oh, but I am," she protested. "I shall be glad to see you in the country and my three small brothers. Oh, it's raining!"

A sharp spring shower was suddenly deluging the earth. Nan made a dive for the doorway of the shop she had just left, followed by both men.

"It won't last," she said breathlessly. "April showers never last long." She was standing so close to Peter that their arms were touching—it turned her sick for a moment to remember the last time they had been together before he went to France—even now she seemed to feel the clasp of his arms around her—the throbbing of his heart beneath her cheek.

She spoke hurriedly to Arnott. "Do you think you could get me a taxi?"

Arnott dashed out into the rain—and Nan leaned against the doorway with a sudden feeling of uncontrollable weakness.

Lyster looked at her curiously, he spoke to her with sudden gentleness. "Is anything the matter, Miss Marraby?"

Nan raised her eyes to his with an effort, her lips quivered into a smile. "Nothing—of course not; no, there is nothing the matter, thank you."

"Unconsciously she shrank a little from him. "Do you know, he said abruptly after a moment, 'I've got a sort of feeling at the back of my mind that you and I have met somewhere before.'"

He paused, but Nan gave no sign, though her heart seemed to leap almost from her body. "Have you ever seen me before?" he asked painfully. "You know—I am sure Arnott has told you—that the shock I had when I was knocked out in France has made me forget some things in my life. They say it's only temporary, and that I shall be all right again, but it's got on my nerves—I'm always dreaming that I shall run across people I ought to know, and not know them."

"I saw you that night at the hotel," she said gently. "I dare say that you are thinking of that."

"Perhaps I am." He sounded relieved; he gave a quick sigh and looked down the wet road in the direction in which Arnott had vanished.

"Arnott seems very bucked to think you will be within easy reach of him at Leavenden," he said, with sudden change of voice. "I suppose you are old friends?"

Nan said "Yes," and then "No," and then added, with a rush, "I don't know; it all depends what you would call old friends."

Arnott came back with the taxi; the rain was dripping from his shoulders, but he was flushed and smiling.

"I had the deuce of a job to get it," he explained to Nan. "I had to go halfway down the street."

Nan thanked him hurriedly; she said "Goodbye" to Peter without looking at him and ran across the path to the waiting cab.

Arnott followed and stood at the door, regardless of the rain pouring down on him.

"And you'll let me know when you're leaving town?" he asked. "You promised, you know," he added, as she hesitated.

"Did I? Very well—do go and take shelter; you're wet through." He shut the door reluctantly. Nan waved a hand to him.

It was only when she reached the flat that she remembered that she had forgotten all about Joan's hat; she hit her lip with vexation. Joan was angry.

"You might have remembered it," she said peevishly. "That was all I asked you to do for me."

Nan did not try to defend herself. "I forgot," she said. "That's my only excuse. I just forgot—I was thinking about something else, and about some worse things than that if you'd got little red demons fighting for your heart!"

she cried with sudden fire. Joan's little maid knocked at the door; she thrust a scared face round.

Joan rushed across the room. "For me, of course—" she grabbed the yellow envelope, glanced at it, and gave a little sigh.

"How silly! I was so sure it

must be for me; but it's for you, Nan."

Nan took out the message. "I have got to go home at once," she said dully. "My stepmother has died very suddenly."

"Nan!" The two girls looked at one another in dismay. Joan had never seen Mrs. Marraby, but she had heard a great deal about her.

"Things always happen in threes," Nan was saying dully. "First Mr. Arnott coming—then the wire from Tim, and now—this."

"Oh, yes, I'll let you know," she said brokenly. "I must go at once, of course I must!"

It was only when she was really in the train and racing out of London that she remembered what Arnott had said about his sister's home being so near to Leavenden. She caught her breath with a gasp. Was this the hand of fate again?—she closed her eyes giddily.

(To Be Continued)



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